# Drones, Aid and Education: The Three Ways to Counter Terrorism

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There is no one group which makes up "terrorism." Terrorism can occur in any country, at any time, by anyone, which makes combatting and preventing terrorism an important, yet challenging task. Since the 'war on terror' began following the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001 numerous wars, counter terrorist strategies, and thousands of deaths have occurred with the intent of countering and preventing terrorism. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2018 report (IEP), in 2017 there were 18,814 deaths caused by terrorism, 22% lower than in 2016. The amount of countries which experienced at least one death caused by terrorism also decreased from record setting 79 countries in 2016 to 67 in 2017. These decreases globally are positive signs in the 'war on terror', but it is important to ensure that long term solutions are in place to prevent future terrorism surges. Decreases in today's overall terrorism statistics mean very little if the root causes of terrorism are not addressed.

There is no one way to prevent terrorism, rather a combination of strategies must be used in conjunction. This paper will argue that the best way to counter terrorism is by using a three-pronged approach, one short-term and two long-term strategies. The short-term strategy focuses on the use of armed drones to target confirmed actors within terrorist organizations, in order to slow the spread of terrorist cells and their influence. The first long-term strategy focuses on untied financial aid for local populations to assist in development projects. This aid would be used to finance social, economic, and physical development projects which will lead to the development of these local areas. The second long-term strategy focuses on improving access to education and vocational training. In order to show the merit of this strategy, this paper will first evaluate current American armed drone policies, the effectiveness of drone strikes on terrorist organizations, and recommend changes to the existing policies. Then the effects of untied aid for development compared to tied aids effects will be analysed. Finally, education's role in combatting and preventing terrorism will be examined.

**Short Term Strategies**

The use of armed drones dramatically increased under former president Barack Obama beginning in 2008, as an alternative to using ground troops to combat terrorism on a larger scale. Due to the difficulty of placing ground troops in remote areas where terrorist cells may be organized, using drone strikes lowers the risk for casualties and firefights (Byman, 2013, p. 2). The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (2019) reports that since 2004, the United States has confirmed the minimum use of 6,786 drone strikes, killing between 8,459-12,105 targets, of which 769-1,725 were civilians. Under the Obama administration regulations on the use of armed drones were increased, including the legal framework for when they can be used, limiting the use of drones by the CIA and non-state actors, and increasing transparency regarding civilian deaths (McCrisken, 2013). Under current president Donald Trump many of these regulations have been reversed, including the requirement for "the US national intelligence director to release … a summary of the number of attacks undertaken by the US against targets outside areas of active hostilities (Al Jazeera, 2019)." This reversal is important because when there is a lack of transparency regarding drone usage, accountability cannot be established, and the extent of consequences, damage, and effectiveness of drone operations become unclear.

When evaluating the effectiveness of drone strikes one must consider what the desired outcomes are from using

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drone strikes compared to other counter terrorist methods. Are the drone strikes occurring in hard to reach areas where it would endanger the lives of ground troops (Byman, 2013, p. 2)? Will the strike successfully kill or destroy the intended target or targets? Will the drone strike slow, decrease, or stop the influence or impact of a terrorist organization or attack? Is the immediate damage inflicted upon non-combatant property or lives, less than the immediate damage inflicted upon the terrorist organization? Boyle (2013, p. 6) argues that since "most … drone strikes are concentrated in ungoverned spaces … it is nearly impossible to verify the number of civilians killed in a drone strike," which allows for the United States and local media to accuse each other of lying about total deaths or who was killed. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (2019) statistic of: "6,786 drone strikes, killing between 8,459-12,105 targets, of which 769-1,725 were civilians," offers a broad range but without evaluating the desired outcomes the effectiveness of drones cannot fully be evaluated. Furthermore, drone strikes slow and prevent the spread of terrorist organizations, "when experienced leaders are eliminated, the result is the rise of lower leaders … who are prone to errors and miscalculations," and drones "also hurt terrorist organizations when they eliminate operatives who are lower down (Byman, 2013, p. 2-3)." Drones can also fly above targeted areas for several hours, allowing the operators to wait before firing to create the least amount of damage to civilians or public infrastructure possible (Stanford Law School, 2012). When viewed in comparison to what the desired outcomes of using drone strikes are, it is apparent that drones are effective as a short-term counter terrorist strategy.

In order to improve upon existing drone strike policy, regulations on the use of drones must be created by military and legislative officials and made public to ensure accountability. Said policy ought to focus on limiting the risk of civilian casualties, limiting the damage done to public infrastructure, and also establish a strict threshold for the requirements which must be met to target an individual or individuals with a drone strike. An example of said restriction would be to limit the type of drone strikes used to only targeted strikes. Targeted strikes are where the targeted individual or individuals' identities are already known and are deemed as threatening to American interests (McCrisken, 2013, p. 98). In contrast to targeted strikes, signature strikes "target not specific individuals but instead groups engaged in suspicious activities. This approach makes it even more difficult to distinguish between combatants and civilians (Byman, 2013, p. 4)." The need for an established threshold for who qualifies as an individual to be targeted with a drone strike is also important because currently "the US records all military-age males in a strike zone as 'militants' unless clear evidence to the contrary emerges after the attack (Boyle, 2013, p. 7)." This assumption of guilty until proven innocent or guilty by association can leave a negative perception amongst the remaining civilians who fear wrongful death and may be a driving force for terrorist recruitment (Boyle, 2013, p. 7-9).

## Long Term Strategies

The use of drone strikes to counter existing terrorist organizations does not address the reason why people join terrorist cells, it is only a short-term solution to a long-term problem. There are numerous causes for terrorism; however, one main reason is a lack of development, and therefore security. The European Union's 2009 Security Strategy contests that, "there cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace (Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 19)." Multiple causes such as war, terrorism, a lack of resources or corruption can force nations to require aid to further industrialize and develop. Without said aid, many problems that stem from a lack of development can be left unsolved or can become worse. A second reason for terrorist recruitment is the lack of education and vocational opportunities within the region. Without access to education or work-based opportunities, rural and poor families have significantly less opportunities to thrive, especially if conflict arises.

### Untied Aid

Nations such as Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Syria are top receivers of foreign aid (Burton, 2017) each year, and also are also locations with high levels of terrorist activity. Many "policy-makers and researchers came to see … underdevelopment and poor governance at the root of armed conflict … and terrorism (Buur, Jensen and Stepputat, 2007, p. 9)," which can help explain the millions sent in aid to these nations. This idea, commonly called the security-development nexus, argues that development is securitized; one cannot increase security without developing and cannot develop without increasing security (IPA, 2004). Many critics of aid programs such as Stephen Moore (NPR, 2017) argue:

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"There's zero evidence that any of these foreign aid programs have had any effect on development, whether it's in the Middle East or Africa or South America. And there's just zero evidence that any of that development aid has had any effect on raising the living standards."

Not only is this factually incorrect, but the type of aid programs Moore goes on to mention rely on tied aid, which is not as effective as untied aid.

The OECD (no date) defines "tied aid" as: "offering aid on the condition that it be used to procure goods or services from the provider of the aid." For example, if the United Kingdom gives one million pounds worth of tied aid to Afghanistan for roads and building construction, all of the materials to build the roads and buildings must be from British company's along with all other expenses stemming from that one million pounds. Very little, if any of the money from tied aid stays within the local communities which significantly decreases its value to the community. For example, instead of local construction firms receiving the funds to build these new roads and allowing the money to stay within the local economy, all the profit returns to the donor nation. In fact, the OECD later goes on to claim that tied aid increases "the costs of a development project by as much as 15-30%," while untied/unconditional aid "avoids unnecessary costs and gives the recipient the freedom to procure goods and services from virtually any country." Half of all international development aid is "tied aid," which effectively devalues the worth of the aid by 15-30% (Malik, 2018). The problem is not that developmental aid is ineffective, the problem is that half of the aid given is required to be spent in order profit the donor nation and the aid receiver pays up to 30% more than they would with untied aid.

Some may argue that if donor nations are required to provide untied aid that it disincentive's offering aid and nations will offer less (Radelet, 2017). However, I would contest this for two reasons: first, it would require less aid to achieve the same result and second, it will lead to faster results. The war on terror costs the United States trillions of dollars, "the US will have dished out nearly $6 trillion on the war on terror by October 2019, and there's no end in sight (Haltiwanger, 2018)." Each year that the war on terror continuous the United States goes further into debt, meaning that saving money on aid while preventing future terrorism is in their best interest. Furthermore, due to the lack of job creation which stems from tied aid, untied aid may incentivize university or higher educated people to work in rural areas if they know they can receive the funding needed to start businesses within their field of expertise outside of the major cities. This could fast track the development of local areas, as they will reap larger benefits from aid and the creation of new jobs while incentivizing education.

*Education*

UNESCO is a leading advocate and facilitator for education reforms within the Middle East, but more must be done to help prevent future extremism and terrorism (UNESCO, 2016). UNESCO designs programs for at risk areas to ensure teacher training and access to quality education, but more stability and developmental funding is needed to ensure students can attend school and have access to these programs. The under 18 age group is particularly important, because setting up the youth for success and providing safe pathways towards economic and social mobility while preventing radicalization is paramount in order to prevent future terrorism. In De Silvas (2017) report entitled the "Role of Education in the Prevention of Violent Extremism," De Silva argues that youths are often the most targeted and at-risk group for radicalization and recruitment and recommends financial institutions like the World Bank focus on them. De Silva (2017) claims that "education has been leveraged to both radicalize and to de-radicalize young people (p. 2)," instead of being used as a tool to create change and help local populations prepare for the future. Following graduation, there must also be opportunities for the newly skilled workers to enter the workforce, as unemployed graduates are also at a higher risk for recruitment (Bhatia and Ghanem, 2017).

Access to education is vital in order to combat violent extremism and terrorism because it creates greater opportunities for local populations and particularly the youth. Within the Middle East and North African (MENA) region, literacy and education rates are already lower than the global average, having an estimated adult literacy rate of only 78% (UNESCO, 2015, p. 4). The remaining 22% equates to roughly 52,000,000 adults who lack basic reading skills, of which roughly 35,000,000 are women. The lack of educational opportunities begins early on and affects those in rural and poorer areas the most. The UNESCO (2015, p. 2) education report goes on to show that in

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Tunisia, pre-primary education enrollment for urban children is at 61% compared to only 17% for rural children. Furthermore, "in Morocco the primary education attainment rate of the poorest children was only 37% in 2009 (p. 4)," which is 31% lower than the global average of 68%. Although education rates have slowly increased since the late 1990's, more funding and development must occur in order to help those in developing areas have the same opportunities as their developed counterparts.

Secondary education is not always an option; particularly for rural and poorer students, which means other alternatives such as technical and vocational training could provide major benefits to these communities. However, these programs are not well supported and participation in them have begun to decrease, "in 2012, technical and vocational programs accounted for an average of 9% of total secondary enrollment in the region, a decline from 14% in 1999 (UNESCO, 2015, p. 4)." Samans and Zahidi (2017, p. 9) argue that within the Middle East a:

"skills gap exists across basic skills, such as creative and independent thinking, problem solving skills and soft skills, as well as in sector-specific and functional skills, including due to low levels of technical and vocational education and training."

This skills gap, below average literacy rates and lack of access to education can be a driving force for terrorist recruitment as the recruiter may be able to provide trade skill training. De Silvas (2017, p. 19) argues that, "skills and vocational training programs are an important entry point for targeting youth and young adults for Countering Violent Extremism," and that the programs can help "demobilization and reintegration" efforts of at risk groups.

## Conclusion

To effectively counter terrorism one must stop both current terrorists while preventing future terrorism from occurring. This means both a short and a long-term solution is required. The short-term strategy involving armed drones has seen the effective killing of thousands of targets in hard to reach areas but has also seen the deaths of hundreds of civilians. When drone policies are viewed in terms of what they set out to accomplish, it is apparent drones are very effective and may prevent loss of ground troops lives. However, under the Trump administration many regulations previously passed have been reversed which has endangered the lives of civilians, public infrastructure, and may be a driving force for terrorist recruitment. By creating new regulations which focus on protecting the public, protecting public infrastructure, and creating a known threshold for what qualifies someone as being acceptable to target with a drone strike, many of the problems associated with the usage of drones will be mitigated.

The long-term strategies focus on the use of untied aid to foster development and therefore stabilize local communities and also increasing access to education and technical training. Roughly half of all development aid is tied aid, meaning it can only be spent to the benefit of the donor nation. This increases development costs by as much as 30%, limits job growth and provides little to the local communities. By using untied aid, the cost of projects will decrease, more jobs can be created, and education is further incentivized if funding is made available to those willing to move to rural areas. Part of the security portion of the security-development nexus argues that aid is being securitized, meaning it is being used for political, strategic, or non-developmental goals (Johansson, 2015). By changing the type of aid offered from the traditional "securitized" tied aid to untied aid, both stability in the sense of increased community security and development can be achieved. Development results will also be achieved faster and the effects from the 'war on terror' will be mitigated.

Noting the key role youths and post-graduates play in the terrorist recruitment process, both educational opportunities and post-graduate work opportunities need to be provided. The Middle East is below global averages in education and literacy rates, and vocational schools are not receiving the support needed to create a skilled labour force. The use of untied aid can stimulate economies and create the necessary jobs, creating funding for families to send students to attend school or vocational training while providing new graduates the jobs needed to prevent radicalization.

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